

## Second Place: Nashid Shinthia

### **If I Were a Librarian V, Coordinator of Youth Services, What a Difference I Would Make**

Mute. Words convey emotions, expressions, and ideas. When I first arrived in the United States of America at the age of ten, I had no words of my own to speak. Because I spoke absolutely zero English, I lacked both a voice and an identity. Books were my inspiration to developing a mind of my own. If I were a librarian V, coordinator of youth service, I would ensure that each child has access to books.

I would expand on the fundamentals of After School Program Inspire Reading Enrichment (ASPIRE). I would have pair of group of four to five children with a mentor. The mentor would be responsible for reading to the children as well as reading with the children. I believe that children learn better when they are engaged in what they are learning. The group of children can act out the play, produce their own version, or simply create something new altogether. This encourages them to be active and utilizes their imagination. The children would have a list to choose from, which would include variety of books of different topics and difficulty levels. As each child gets progressively more skilled, the reading difficulty will change accordingly. The list itself would change to accommodate. Each week trivia questions can be given to the children based on the books they've read. Correct answers will win gift cards to Borders or Barnes and Nobles. The program itself would be affiliated with local, YMCA, and different daycares so that children would be more informed about it, increasing the rate of participation.

I would make sure that more books on tapes were available for the children. This would ensure portability and build independence as the child grasps tougher vocabulary. Many tapes are available in Spanish and those who just listen to the Spanish version miss out on the English version. I would have the Spanish tape right along side of the English tape, so that a child may pick up on what was lost in translation while gaining exposure to both languages.

Each community and its customs are distinct. However, the thirst of knowledge is universal. Pamphlets with specific directions from each side of the city (the north, the south, the east, and the west) to the different libraries should be given. Book fairs can be held at different cultural events that take place in Houston. Representatives from the libraries may speak at these events to make the general public aware of the children's reading materials and the benefits they gain because of it.

Today's youth is tomorrow's future. The foundations which are being laid today affect the events of tomorrow. It is a duty to educate the youths so that the basic principles and values are passed on. I found my voice through literature. Millions of children need to find the voice they haven't yet found. Let them have a say.